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ABSTRACT

This collection of handouts from a workshop on meeting the needs of at-risk urban students stresses the necessity of empathy and involvement in working with disadvantaged youth. The first handouts, "I Remember When I Was a Teenager," and "Teens Need To Have Adults That...," remind the adult youth worker of adolescent characteristics. "Sports and Curriculum" introduces a way to reinforce language arts studies through slogans that promote student motivation. The idea of the "Eagle Team" is introduced as an example for creating a slogan, and this theme is continued in discussions of problems and exercises in the disciplines of mathematics, social studies, fine arts, and the performing arts. Suggested activities for these fields highlight the teamwork concept. "Adultism as a Barrier to Effective Communication" is another handout designed to refresh the adult's memory of what it was to be an adolescent. A summary reviews ways to identify a winner, and stresses that successful urban districts demonstrate winning behavior because they come into the game with a sense that victory is to be expected. A list of 27 related readings offers information about the influences of rap music and sports on inner city youth. (SLD)

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TO HOPE AND INTEREST:

"Besides, They'll see how beautiful I am
and be ashamed --
I, too, am America."

Langston Hughes

"Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to
take the chance.
They chose the music, so they had to dance."
The Geto Boys

FROM HIP HOP

Creative Curricula for At-Risk Students

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ABSTRACT

American Youth have been referred to by a variety of negative terms and descriptions in recent media reports. Each of us is familiar with at least one of them - "endangered black males," "at-risk youth," "more black men in prison than in college," "disproportionate rate of teen pregnancies among black females," "gang-bangers," "high drop rates for Hispanic students." Each positive report about a teen-ager appears to be overshadowed by four or five horror stories of drive-by shootings, gang violence, and other forms of brutality.

How did this happen? Each of the individuals in attendance at this conference is a representative of the UNCF''s admonition to avoid the waste of our intellectual capital. If the minority professionals among us have swelled enough in size to merit ethnic professional associations, surely things must be on an upward swing? Right????

Many of the individuals who transcended urban poverty, racism, and sexism have failed to return to the communities which created their core senses of identity. Prior to the fall of segregated housing, Blacks and Hispanics had no choice in the selection of their neighborhoods. Now that increased minority incomes have permitted them to flee to the suburbs, the sense of camaraderie which cut across lines of class and income has dissipated. The urban centers of the fifties and early sixties mixed winos, ladies of the evening, professionals, and community leaders within one geographical boundary. This is no longer the case.

Am I advocating that urban pioneers sell our comfortable places of residence to return to public housing? NO. Must one be homeless or unemployed to feel empathy for the young brother or sister who is less fortunate? NO. This workshop is designed for the individual of any ethnic persuasion who is willing to take a dare. Dare to make a difference. Dare to be different. Most of all, *DARE TO CARE!!!!*

We can not entrust futures, sense of identity, pride in ethnicity, and aspirations for success to the benevolence of corporate America and government programs. If our youth have any opportunity to transcend the current and prevalent culture, which provides merit for mediocrity, it lies within the individuals who are represented here today.

At the conclusion of our session, we will set personal goals to convert ideas into action plans. It is not enough for us to proclaim, "I HAVE A DREAM." Why can't we create a vision which places value upon serving as role models, mentors, and cheer leaders? Taking it to the streets is not easy, but we can do it.

I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER

Please briefly answer the following questions:

1. **My favorite kind of music was _____.**
   My favorite radio stations were _____.
   My favorite D.J. was _____.

2. **The clothes I wore the most were_____**

3. **My best friend was _____.**

4. **The biggest crush I had was on _____.**

5. **My worst teacher was _____.**
   My worst subject was _____.

6. **I had too much/ too little body hair (circle one).**

7. **What scared me the most about the opposite sex was _____.**
   What scared me most about the same sex was _____.

8. **My main source of information about sex was _____.**

9. **I could tell my secrets to _____.**

10. **The adult I trusted or who "understood" was _____.**

11. **The secret I never told anyone was _____.**

12. **My most disgusting habit was _____.**

13. **My most embarrassing moment was _____ _____.**

14. My most powerful moment was
_____

_____

15. I was different from everyone else because
_____.

16. The thing I wanted to change the most about myself was_____
_____.

17. I most wanted to be _____.

18. One thing I've forgotten about those years is
_____
_____.

19. One thing I'll never forget _____
_____

Think of the young adults in your classes or groups. Can you apply any of these insecurities or memories to any one of them?

TEENS NEED TO HAVE ADULTS THAT .....

* listen
* model strength, openness, respect, trust, and cooperation
* encourage and support the same in teens
* provide information
* respect the intelligence of everyone at all times
* value teens' fears and problems as genuine
* provide lots of options and encourage the creation of new options
* not try to force change on anyone
* prevent trashing - adult to teen, teen to adult, and teen by teen
* prevent rudeness, judging (especially judgments about appearance) lecturing, attitudes of disrespect, or the attitude that one is "incorrect" or blameworthy for what she/he believes at the present time
* recognize that small steps and activities are important and need to be encouraged

  acknowledge that people are doing the best they can given the information they possess and the thinking they have been allowed to do
* not rescue young people; at the same time, be prepared with resources should they be needed and requested
* facilitate teens' self-consciousness as a group; foster their chances to share information with one another, respect for one another, and experience their power as a group
* refer the group back to its own resources
* bring out the common features of teens' experiences of hurt, resistance to hurt, and power
* facilitate the breaking down of family and group insularity that prevent community intervention in abusive situations
* talk from the heart
* help each person identify personal issues and solutions

ADD ANY ADDITIONAL NEEDS THAT ARE NOT COVERED ON THIS LIST.....

MORE GENERALLY, TEEN NEED ADULTS TO —

understand the systematic mistreatment that young people receive in this adult-defined world and correct that mistreatment.
welcome and celebrate making mistakes and be willing to risk and learn
support teens being 100% powerful

Source: Creighton, Allan & Kivel, Paul. *Helping Teens Stop Violence: A Practical Guide for Counselors, Educators, and Parents.* Hunter House, c. 1992

SPORTS AND THE AT-RISK YOUTH

Many states have adopted "no pass, no play" regulations for the secondary schools. This is carried forward for the athlete with shaky academic credentials through the adoption of a "red shirt" policy for scholarship recipients. These young adults are encouraged to reinforce their academic credentials for their first year of eligibility by focusing upon classes before placement in starting line ups. Complete the following chart:

High School Athletic Programs

PROS	CONS
Discipline through Practice	Body Over Brain Development
Physical Fitness	
Increased Self-Esteem through Achievement on the Field	Unrealistic Expectations
Learning Teamwork	Creation of a "Special Class"
	Diminished Academic Expectations

SPORTS AND CURRICULUM

School spirit can be transformed into spirited classroom competition with small doses of imagination.

LANGUAGE ARTS

What is the school mascot or team name? Have students brainstorm to use the letters of the mascot to create a motivational acronym. (Example - EAGLE)

I AM AN EAGLE!

I CAN E XCEL

I WILL A CHIEVE

I HAVE G OALS

I L OVE

I E XECUTE AND E XPLODE!!!

MATHEMATICS

WORD PROBLEMS

In 1991, the Eagle Team won ten of fifteen games. The 1992 season produced twelve wins out of fifteen games. How many games will the team win in 1993, if their percentage of wins continues at the same rate?

What is the ration of wins to losses?

SOCIAL STUDIES

The Eagles come from a suburban community at the edge of a large urban school district. List the demographics of the Eagle's School District. What are the demographics for the adjacent urban area? (Include per capita income and other census data) What is the per capita expense for each student in the Eagles' district? The adjacent community?

What percentage of Eagles will be likely to go on to college in their district. In the surrounding district? What factors create the disparity/similarity in high school graduation rates?

FINE ARTS

Poster Contests with competition for a new school logo.

Compose a fight song, school hymn, etc.

PERFORMING ARTS

Have the class create three fictional players. Give them two or three possible scenarios involving these players' life off campus. Have the class write and produce a play about their characters. Give them free rein in genre, setting, and scenery.

These are but a few scenarios within the school setting itself. Can we translate these activities into "real-world" assignments beyond the doors of the classroom?

List a minimum of three activities that involve parents and the community at large. Consider.....

* Positive media attention on the student's achievements.
* Eliciting support from and involvement from the business community.
* Encouraging the students to document their achievements.
* Role plays that give the students preparation and confidence to "take their victories to the streets."

"ADULTISM AS A BARRIER TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION"

Gangs are often attractive options to young adults who lack a sense of approval, respect, love, and trust from the adults in their environments. This goes beyond the traditional "generation gap" which has plagued parents and children since the time of Adam and Eve.

When we consistently blame teens for failure, label them as lazy, troublesome, dishonest, and stupid; they become prime targets for undesirable affiliations. Paul Kivel, one of the founders of the Oakland Men's Projects, called this type of behavior from adult role models - ADULTISM. Nearly everyone in the room will recognize the following expressions. Think back to how you felt when you heard them. How often do you use the same expressions?

* Not now. I don't have time.
* You're too young to understand.
* Go to your room.
* Not until you finish your homework.
* Clean your plate.
* I work my fingers to the bone for you.
* Wait till you have children.
* When I was your age, I had it a lot harder.
* Do what I say.
* Not in my house (class) you don't.
* Because I said so.
* Sit up. Sit up straight.
* Don't you talk back to me.
* Is that the best you can do?
* Pay attention when I'm talking to you.
* You're stupid.
* Shut up.
* You show me some respect.
* This hurts me more than it hurts you.
* You get right upstairs and change into something decent.
* Get the hell out of here.
* I brought you into this world -- I can take you out!!!

SUMMARY

America is a country that places great emphasis upon winning. Would we care as much about the status of urban schools if other civilized nations had similar or lower drop out rates, test scores, or collective knowledge? Perhaps urban education can benefit from new paradigms for winners and losers, success and failure, and the applications of a quality education.

Although the future citizens who enter the classrooms of the nineties are not the innocents who read Dick and Jane, they bring rewarding challenges for teachers, administrators, and school boards who are willing to exchange old ways for new days.

WAYS TO TELL A WINNER

1. *Winners first want to win! Don't give up on our children.*

2. *A winner says, "Let's find out"; a loser says, "nobody knows what to do about today's schools."*

3. *When a winner makes a mistake, he says, "I was wrong"; when a loser makes a mistake, he says, "it wasn't my fault. We used all of the best curriculum."*

4. *A winner goes through a problem; a loser goes around it, and never gets past it.*

5. *A winner makes commitments; a loser makes promises. The time for empty promises has passed.*

6. *A winner says, "Our schools are good, but not as good as they ought to be"; but a loser says, They're not as bad as a lot of other schools."*

7. *A winner tries to learn from systems that work; a loser tries to tear down new and imaginative ideas.*

8. *A winner says, "There ought to be a better way to do it"; a loser says, "That's the way it's always been done here."*

9. *A winner listens and learns; losers talk about they're going to do.*

10. *A winner asks questions and listens to the answers; a loser never listens.*

11. *A winner discusses opportunities; a loser complains about problems.*

12. *A winner welcomes taking a risk to meet a challenge; a loser won't take a risk.*

13. *A winner repeats behavior that works and avoids behavior that doesn't work; a loser repeats behavior because it is comfortable .*

(Adapted from Leadership Management Dynamics)

Successful urban school districts demonstrate winning behavior because they come into the game with a sense of victory. Never let defeating behavior stall your dream or stifle your creativity !

RELATED READINGS

The following compilation of books, articles, and ERIC documents will provide eye- opening information about the depth of influence of rap music and sports. These articles also provide some information that defies conventional wisdom. Perhaps it is time to re-examine some of the traditional assumptions that we have made about "proper" curricula for core subjects.

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Sylvia Ryce Cornell is an experienced trainer and consultant. Her background as a librarian and professional trainer gives her a rare ability to bring detailed information and resources to any project which is undertaken by the company. Cornell combines a Master's Degree in Library Science from Atlanta University and a Master of Science in Occupational Education from the University of Houston. She has experience in Vocational Education through her five-year tenure at Houston Community College as Industrial Education Librarian.

Cornell was exposed to model programs throughout the country as she implemented competency-based programs in the libraries that served Industrial Education Programs. This reinforced her conviction that education and business can meet on common ground to prepare a workforce with technical and critical thinking skills. Cornell has made several presentations on quality partnerships between business and industry, diversity, and strategies for reclaiming at-risk youth to major conferences. Her research for three of these presentations was published as ERIC documents. Presentations on Quality Partnerships between Educators and Industry were published in 1991 and 1997. "Beyond the Buzzwords: Delivering Diversity Training That Makes A Difference," an ASTD International Presentation, appeared in 1994.

Sylvia maintains professional ties with the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), the American Vocational Association (AVA), and the Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research (SIETAR). Professional involvements assist Ms. Cornell in keeping abreast of relevant issues in the rapidly developing area of Training and Development. This is reflected on the Internet at Http://members.aol.com/creatvcncp/homepage.htm.

Cornell's expertise includes program design and instructional design in the areas of Total Quality Management, Diversity, Intercultural Communication, and Leadership Development. Her post graduate work includes additional course work at the American Productivity and Quality Center and at the Center for Creative Leadership. She has designed and implemented several Leadership Development and Motivational programs for local school districts and universities. Cornell designed and implemented a diversity program for AstroWorld, a division of the Six Flags Over America theme parks.